April 6th, 2005

To whom it may concern,

I’m going to do it, world! I’m going to end all of this shit right now! I’m done!

I can’t go on anymore; I can’t live this sucky, painful, worthless life anymore. No one really cares anyway (not even the person who will find me or who will read this). My mom sure as hell doesn’t care about me, that’s for damn sure!! She doesn’t pay any attention to me now anyway. She’s always working and when she’s not working—she’s going out on dates with… Steve- what a piece of crap!! She acts like she is my age! Hello?? YOU ARE NOT A TEENAGER—what she is doing is just gross! She doesn’t love ME as much as she claims to love Steve… Steve only wants her money anyway- so he can buy his drugs—I’ve seen him steal from her purse (and I know she saw it too) and he does his coke lines right in front of Amy and I—but yet Mom continues to love him unconditionally? How come she doesn’t love me like that?

Whatever, I don’t really care anymore, like I said… I’m done!!

And since I won’t be here after tonight….

It’s time for some secrets to come out…

When I was 10 years old, when we ALL lived in Tyrone**1**, back when my family was still together, “happy”, and “loved” each other… just me, my mom, my dad, and my sister, Amy. My dad and I used to play a game, at least that’s what he called it…

We would only play when Mom wasn’t home—she would always be “working late on a presentation” (which I happen to know this was about the time that she met Steve)… convenient, huh?

My dad would take me into my bedroom, close the door, and tell me to take my clothes off… I did, because it just seemed normal. I thought every dad made his daughters do this; well, the lucky ones anyway (if their dads loved them as much as my dad “loved” me). He would always start off the same way… by reading me ‘Goodnight Moon’**2** and slowly he would put his arms around me. After the story was read, he would climb over top of me and tell me to lay very still… this lasted about 20-30 minutes, every day for about a year. Right up until my parents got divorced (because she was caught cheating, big

1 "Blair County, Pennsylvania." *Wikipedia*.

1 "Tyrone, Pennsylvania." *Wikipedia*.

2 Brown, Margaret Wise, and Clement Hurd. *Goodnight Moon*

freaking surprise!) and my mom started renting an apartment, in which I move into too, and it didn’t take long for Steve to move in. (I HATE Steve—I wish I could kill him!!) Eventually I stopped thinking about “the game” my dad and I used to play.

But it doesn’t matter… in a few hours I’m the one who will be dead and I won’t have to deal with anybody or anything anymore.

In school today, there was a seminar which taught about signs of abuse; about physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. That was when it hit me: my.dad.sexually.abused.me.

I ran out of the auditorium and into the bathroom, screaming for everyone else to leave or I would punch them all in their faces; those middle school girls ran out with disgusted looks on their faces. I threw a stall door open, entered and slammed the door behind me, and then planted my face into the toilet and threw up. I fell to the ground, vomit covered but no tears streamed down my face (crying is a sign of weakness, I needed to be tough, to hold it all in). WTF?! How can this be my life? How did I end up being here? Being THAT girl?! I can’t tell anybody now; it’s been too much time, it’s embarrassing, and besides…. I think it’s my fault. But I was so young, I didn’t know any better, don’t blame me for it! It wasn’t my fault, was it? But I didn’t say “no” or “stop”, so maybe it really was my fault?

I don’t ever want to see any of them again; not my dad, my mom, or Steve. I will never be able to forgive any of them anyway!! I hate them all! How can I move on from this? What can I do? I’m never going to be able to escape this. It’s never going to feel safe, I can’t do this anymore! AHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH —it doesn’t matter anymore… I’m done!

So I’ve decided, I’m ending my life tonight, as soon as I’m done writing this, but first…

Dear Amy,

I’m sorry. I know you won’t understand this or ever forgive me. I never wanted to hurt you like this. I love you.

~Charlotte

April 13th, 2005

Woke up today in a freaking hospital bed and my wrists hurt. What the hell? I can’t even kill myself the right freaking way!! And now they tell me they are sending me off to something called a group home for troubled teens?!? What does that even mean? There is a social worker involved now and my sister has to go stay with my grandparents. What is going on? All I wanted to do was leave this earth; never to return again… is that so hard to do? Obviously it is for me, the biggest failure in the entire world! My mom isn’t even here in my hospital room with me! She must really care a lot about me, huh? Screw it, I don’t need anybody! I will get through this “group home” bullshit & then try ending it all again.

~Charlotte

May 14th, 2005

They’re a bunch of freaks here at Looking Forward Group Home, seriously!! WTF is this shit? They have a bunch of Jesus freaks taking care of me and all the other teens here…. The social worker, Helen, and her husband, Mark, expect ME to wake up on Sunday mornings to go to church?! Are you freaking kidding me?!

So I have to be home-schooled here AND go to church?! This sucks!

Oh well, I bet I will burst into flames as soon as I step foot into the church anyway and that’s what I want, after all- to be gone from everywhere.

But there is the girl here, Megan (who is a runaway), she reminds me so much of Amy, I miss Amy… I can’t protect her while I’m in here. Well, actually I didn’t do a very good job of protecting her while I was out there either, I abandoned her, and isn’t that why I’ve been so mad at my mom?

NO, I’m nothing like my mother; at least I’m capable of loving my sister. That’s more than my mom ever did for either one of us. Screw it. Screw her.

I hate this place. Why can’t I just leave? Helen and Mark are idiots and they don’t even care about me, nobody does. I’m all alone and that’s all I’m ever going to be.

~Charlotte

May 15th, 2005

Damn it, I didn’t burn as I walked into the church this morning, which meant I had to suffer through the whole service. GAG. The message was about how God’s love is so great for everyone… well apparently I missed out on that memo because God couldn’t possibly love me. Not after everything that’s happened, why would he let all that happen to me?

I mean, come on? How could Helen and Mark’s God love everyone? That’s not even possible, right?

When I asked Megan about it she looked somewhat offended and told me that it’s true. OMG, they got her too!!! What am I going to do? I thought I would at least have one “friend” who was on the same page as I am while I’m stuck in this hellhole. Damn, that sucks. What does she mean by “it’s true” anyway? How would she know? Has she ever seen God? Has she ever heard God? Felt Him?

I don’t think so, man. No way are they going to get me to believe in this shit. I refuse to become part of their “cult”.

I’m just going to keep to myself, the way it has been my whole life so far.

~Charlotte

August, 25th 2005

I heard something in church this past Sunday and IDK if it’s true or not, but I’ve made a decision, just in case.

The pastor said that if you commit suicide you will go to hell. I don’t really want to go to hell, it doesn’t sound very nice. I don’t even know if I believe in heaven and hell… but I’ve decided that I’m not going to end my life but mostly that’s because of Amy. I don’t really want to leave her in this world alone. After all, I’m the only one who really cares about her. So as soon as I get out of here I’m going to get Amy and we are going to go off on our own and I will take care of her. I will take her to school every day, and not make her ride the bus like mom and dad made me… damn, Amy starts 3rd grade soon. Once I get out of here I won’t ever miss one of Amy’s first days of school ever again. That is… IF I ever get out of here.

I haven’t really talked to anybody since I have been in here, other than Megan. But I haven’t said anything to her about why I’m in here. I know that Helen and Mark must know but they haven’t said anything to me or asked me about it yet… I wonder if they are going to. What would I say? Would I even say anything to them? It’s none of their business, right?

~Charlotte

October, 31st 2005

Today was different. Much different than all the other days I’ve had here… I’m not sure what to think about it but this is what happened:

It’s Halloween. A lot of the other teens dressed up in their lame costumes and went out with Mark to the community center for trick-or-treating and the carnival. I stayed behind though; I didn’t want to hang out with them anyway. The house was quiet and I was bored so I decided to finally ask Helen what her deal is. And she had no clue what I meant by that. So I had to explain and ask why she didn’t care enough to ask about my life BEFORE I came into this place. She said that it was up to me when I wanted to tell her. That’s so crazy… isn’t she the adult? Isn’t she supposed to just tell the teens what they’re supposed to do; when to talk and how to act? She is so confusing! IDK, I sat there for a while not knowing what to say… until finally I just couldn’t take the silence any longer.

“I tried to kill myself”. We both looked at the scars on my wrists and then Helen asked me “why?”… I told her EVERYTHING. I told her about the pain I felt when I made that decision, my mom’s neglect towards me, how she loves Steve, how my dad sexually abused me, all the hate I have towards them and how I can NEVER forgive them for any of it, and also, how scared I am for Amy. It was like a physical weight is lifted off of my shoulders now!! We talked for hours and only stopped when Mark shoved the door open to let us know that they were back. Helen prayed for me, which was the first time anyone has done that, ever.

I got up and just before I was about to leave she asked me something, something that made me smile, I haven’t smiled for such a long time, I missed that feeling.

She asked me, “What do you want to do for your birthday?”

~Charlotte

November 12th, 2005

Part I:

Ok, so I will admit it, I actually had a pretty good day today. It’s my birthday. When Helen asked me a few weeks ago what I wanted to do for my birthday, I told her that I wanted to have a pool party… I didn’t know what else to say and besides, I thought it was pretty dumb because its way to cold here, in Pennsylvania, to go swimming now. I woke up to see that Helen and Mark had hung up “happy birthday” banners overnight, baked a cake, and got all the other teens to sing to me. THAT amazed me! Haha… I couldn’t believe it! But I never expected what happened next. Helen told all of us teens to go grab our bathing suits and towels and then we all climbed into the van and went to the community center, which has a pool. I got my pool party!! Could it be that I was wrong this whole time? That Helen and Mark really do care about me and love me? This thing is, I think I actually love them too.

Part II:

All of the counseling here is kind of overwhelming but I think that it’s helping. It’s still weird to think about people caring about me but it’s nice to have some people to talk about my problems. We have been working in the community on different projects too. Some of the other teens have drug addictions, while others are pathological liars. Others may receive medication for their specific problems. I’ve never seen anything like this place. Group homes help with so many different problems and the workers really do want to help us.

~Charlotte

January 11th, 2006

I think that there might be a God after all. I know I said this is a cult and maybe it is. But I’m starting to believe what Helen and Mark and the pastor from their church are saying. Is there a God out there? If so, where is He? The stuff they are saying to me makes sense but if it’s real, where’s the proof? How can they pray to a God that they can never truly see? I think I’m going to ask Helen about it… I have really come to trust her. Which is a huge deal! I didn’t used to trust anybody here or anyone at all, for that matter.

~Charlotte

May 12th, 2006

I’ve been here at Looking Forward Group Home for Troubled Teens for almost a year now.

Today, I finally worked up enough courage to ask Helen about God. I was nervous because I didn’t want to have to hear her tell me that God is mad at me or that I am a bad person or unforgivable. But, actually, she told me the opposite of all that. She said that God loves me and that He has already forgiven me for everything I have ever done; forgiven me for all the hate I am keeping in my heart. She says that God doesn’t want me to feel that way anymore. That he wants me to give it all to him, but she knows that will take time.

But now I’m fully convinced that God is real. After talking with Helen and Mark and hearing their stories and listening to the pastor speak, I know God is real.

So while I was talking to Helen earlier she asked me if I am “saved”. I said that I didn’t know and she told me that she takes an “IDK, as a no”…. so as of today I am officially saved!!!!!

Helen prayed for me and made me repeat after her; a prayer to accept Jesus into my heart!! It was kind of incredible!! She told me that this is the most important decision that I could ever make in my life & she looked at me like she was proud… damn, this is the feeling I had been missing from my own family; love and acceptance. (I’m still not ready to forgive my mom or dad yet though… but I’m hoping someday I will!!)

I’m not sure how long this is going to last, IDK when I’m going to have to leave Looking Forward… I’m going to miss all of the people I have met while I have been here and I have come to actually like school here now.

I’ve come to realize that I don’t ever want to leave because I have found what I have been missing for so long… a sense of peace.

~Charlotte

September 19th, 2006

Ya know what? I’m tired of holding all this anger in all the time. My family is screwed up!! And what they did wasn’t right BUT I’m done letting this take over my life!!!

So today I realize that I forgive them… forgive it ALL. That’s CRAZY to say… but it’s so true... and I feel amazing!!!

My dad did a horrible thing… and I will never make him a part of my life again or let him be part of Amy’s either. My dad doesn’t deserve my forgiveness; but God forgave me, even though I don’t deserve it @ all… I want to live my life for God. And to try and be like Him; even though I will come up short EVERY time.

I refuse to leave this Christian group home and not be changed. I refuse to remember these encounters with God and not let that affect the way I live my life!!

Today, realizing THAT… makes me feel so much better. I can’t believe how far I have come since I first came to Looking Forward.

This is seriously the best day of my life and I owe everything I am right now, to Him. Thank you Jesus!!

~Charlotte

November 11th, 2006

It’s my 18th birthday tomorrow (which means my time here, is up). I’m moving out of the group home.

Helen and Mark helped me register at a local high school, find a part-time job, and apply to some Christian colleges. I’m not sure where my life is going to lead to next but Helen and Mark are providing me with more than enough help. I love them so much and we are going to stay in touch.

I’m going to live with my Aunt for a while and eventually commute to college. My life is so different from how it used to be and so different from how it would have been if I had stayed on that hopeless and loveless and unsafe path. I’m “looking forward” (oh, now I get the name, haha) to what is ahead of me but will never forget my past, because without it—without my dark secrets and pain that I kept inside—I never would have found eternal peace.

~Charlotte

November 12th, 2006

Wow…. it’s been a year and a half since I came to Looking Forward. It’s sad to leave Helen and Mark. They are like the parents I always wanted. God has put them in my life for a reason; that being, so they could introduce me to God and to help me be able to forgive my family. I’m so grateful for that and always will be.

I’m sad to be leaving but I know that God has a plan for my future. He is going to use me and I’m just praying that I hear His call for my life when it comes.

~Charlotte

March 16th, 2013

Dang, I just found this old journal. I haven’t seen or written in this thing for years. I’m surprised I still have it. But since I did find it, I might as well update it:

I’m actually to doing really well. My life isn’t perfect but I never expected it to be. I’m alive and that’s more than I could say just a few years ago (well 8 years ago). I never tried to end my life again. Praise God!

After I left the group home I lived with my Aunt Karen and a few months later Amy moved in with us. Aunt Karen let me visit Helen and Mark often while I was attending high school, which I graduated from in 2007!!

I went on to Valley Forge Christian College and majored in Christian Counseling. Class of 2011!!

Helen and Mark, of course, were in attendance, along with my Aunt Karen. My parents weren’t, as far as I know. I haven’t spoken to them for years and that’s alright; they are getting the help they need.

I get updates about them every so often. My mom kicked Steve out recently, she started going to counseling, and even has been going to church! I may never understand why she neglected me all those years but I have come to terms with the fact that she did.

My dad: he checked himself into a hospital a few years ago and hasn’t been heard from since. He can’t handle what he did, in his own mind. I’m not going to go visit him, but I pray for him anyway.

And then there’s Amy…. she is a senior in high school now! After she moved in with us, I began telling her all about my experience and what I had learned. She started going to church with me and eventually became saved!! She plans on being a missionary in Honduras!! I’m so proud of her. I love her so much.

So now I’m just being myself and I get to work with teenagers who are just like how I was. This must be how Helen and Mark felt when they saw me; so much hope. My heart goes out to these teens, I know what they have been through and can relate to them. They are starting to open up to me now and I’m so incredibly excited for them and the journey they are about to embark on.

I’m so thankful for EVERY past event in my life that has brought me to this point. I will never get over this feeling and never want to.

Different journalists have been contacting me about “getting my story out there”. I wasn’t too keen on the idea at first but I’m warming up to the idea now because it has the potential to touch more people’s lives; which is exactly what I’m supposed to do! I actually have an opportunity to speak in front of 2,000 young women about my experiences and give a speech on forgiveness. I’m so pumped for that and I’m not even nervous… God will give me the words.

I never could have gotten here without my group home experience, it has changed my life FOREVER!!

So, that’s my life now—one that is worth living, one that has a purpose, one that is just waiting to meet God up in Heaven one day—but until then, I’m going to do His will ☺

So in honor of this last entry, I will leave you with these words:

“You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing—if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?”**3**

-Galatians 3: 1-5

~Charlotte

3 "Galatians 3 NIV." *Galatians 3 NIV*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2013. <http://niv.scripturetext.com/galatians/3.htm>.